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Foster Care Observance Highlights Need for Homes, Recognizes Families

WILMINGTON – Governor Ruth Ann Minner is proclaiming May as Foster Care Month to encourage Delaware residents to make a difference in the lives of children by considering becoming foster parents. Delaware is joining in the national observance to recruit and acknowledge foster families who are providing safe, stable, and supportive homes for children and youth who are unable to live with their birth families.

Governor Minner in her proclamation recognizes that foster parents support the Delaware Children's Department mission to "Think of the Child First" by providing a valuable and important service to some of the state's most vulnerable children and their families and by generously devoting their homes, lives, and families to give to children in foster care the support they need to survive and grow, physically, emotionally, educationally, and socially.

Delaware's observance of Foster Care Month includes an advertising campaign in print and broadcast media that is geared to increasing the number of foster families and volunteers; raising public awareness about the need to keep children connected to their extended families, to place siblings in care together, and to sustain children in their own communities and schools; advocating for services and supports to help young people make successful transitions to adulthood; highlighting success stories and positive aspects of foster care; and putting a human face on what is perceived to be a foster care "system."

On any given day, there are over 8,000 children in the care of the Delaware Children's Department. While most are served in their homes, about 700 children are in foster care because of abuse, neglect, abandonment or some other serious dysfunction in their family unit.

Cabinet Secretary Cari DeSantis said the observance is a time to raise awareness and to celebrate those individuals who have answered the Governor's call to provide a safe, stable home for children in crisis so they can learn and grow in self esteem and engender a sense of hope for their futures.

"We are always in need of individuals and families to provide loving, supportive homes so that our children will gain the self-confidence and skills they need to grow into happy, healthy adults," said Secretary DeSantis. "During Foster Care Month we recognize the efforts of these caring people who are making a difference in the life of a child. We ask others to consider such a rewarding opportunity."

Children in need of foster homes range from infants through teens, come from all racial and ethnic groups, and may have special physical, mental or educational needs. Many children require special support to catch up educationally and socially with their peers. Individuals or couples of any religion, creed, ethnicity or sexual orientation may apply to foster a child. For more information on how to become a foster parent or to adopt a child, call 1-800-464-4357 or visit <http://www.state.de.us/kids/>.

"All children need a place to call home," Secretary DeSantis said. "If a family or individual is able to welcome a child into their home, their love and guidance is a gift that will last a lifetime."

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